



WSDOT Aviation Update on the Long-Term Air Transportation Study (LATS) Initiative

JULY 2006

PURPOSE: The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide a progress report on the Long-Term Air Transportation Study (LATS), which the Governor authorized in 2005 through Engrossed Senate Substitute Bill (ESSB) 5121. The primary focus of LATS is to conduct a comprehensive statewide study of general aviation and commercial service airports. The study will examine existing airport conditions, system dynamics, market trends and capacity with emphasis on airport facilities and passenger and air cargo capacity. The study will identify how the aviation system meets current demand and determine what is needed to meet future air transportation demand. LATS will also provide for special focus on the four high population regions in the state, which include the Puget Sound, Southwest Washington, Spokane and Tri-Cities. A high-speed passenger rail assessment will also be conducted.

OUTCOME: LATS recommendations and findings are intended to provide guidance on meeting future aviation needs. LATS will support long-term aviation investment decisions in Washington State.

BACKGROUND: WSDOT Aviation initiated LATS in January 2006. After selecting a consultant team, WSDOT developed a scope of work and submitted it to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for review. LATS was officially authorized to begin in late April 2006.

LATS is comprised of three phases:

- Phase I: Airport inventory, capacity and airspace assessment. Deadline is set for September 30, 2006.
- Phase II: Twenty-five year demand activity forecast and market analyses, including an air cargo and high speed passenger rail assessment and future capacity analysis. Deadline is set for July 2007.
- Phase III: Governor-appointed aviation planning council to provide recommendations for future statewide aviation needs based on fact finding in Phases I and II. Deadline is set for July 2009.

An extensive public information and outreach effort will support all three phases of the project. Specifically, during Phase III, the planning council will use public input when making recommendations.

Progress to Date:

January to July

Preliminary Scoping Meeting. The FAA, WSDOT and consultant team held a meeting in early January to begin development of the scope of work for the project.

LATS Web Page and Public Information Material. A webpage was developed as part of the WSDOT Aviation website. The website includes an interactive area to sign up for email information, view news and project information, learn about upcoming meetings and access reports.

Airport Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC). A 14 member Airport Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) was established to assist in the technical review of LATS. The purpose of the committee will be to work together towards a common set of objectives to ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach to the development of the study. The technical committee is made up of a diverse group of people from varying geographical areas and backgrounds with technical knowledge and expertise on multimodal transportation issues.

Communication and Public Outreach Plan. A Communications and Public Outreach Plan was developed with public input in February. The plan provided an overview of the public outreach and communication efforts that will be utilized throughout LATS.

FAA AIP Grant Award. The FAA approved the project and issued the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) Grant on April 26, 2006.

Project Kickoff Meeting. WSDOT, FAA, Consultant Team and the ATAC met on May 15, 2006 to discuss project specifics, responsibilities and timeline of the project.

Airport Master Plans, Airport Layout Plans and Special Aviation Studies Collected. Beginning in May, the consultant team began collecting existing airport studies, aviation forecasts, air service and other relevant studies and information that has been conducted within the state.

Quarterly E-Newsletter. In June, a quarterly news letter was developed and sent to over 6,000 people on the Aviation list serve and made available on the LATS web page. The quarterly newsletter contained information about the statewide project, announced opportunities for public input and informed the public about the progress of the study.

Airport Facility and Services Web-based Survey. A web-based survey was developed to collect airport facility and service information for all 139 public use airport within the State. The survey was released on June 12, 2006.

Regional Coordination Meetings. In June, four regional technical coordination meetings were held throughout the state to brief airport managers on the study and to discuss the web-based survey. Meetings were held June 20th at the Boeing Field Museum in Seattle, June 21st in Chehalis, June 26th in Spokane and June 29th in Moses Lake.

Stakeholder Interviews. Industry stakeholders, local jurisdictions and decision makers are being contacted to collect information on key aviation issues and their preferred methods for engaging the study. The survey began in June and will be completed in late July. The results will be used for an on-line survey that will be initiated in late summer of 2006.

Commercial Service Airport Site Visits. During the last two weeks of June, the consultant team conducted fifteen on-site interviews with commercial airports across the state. The purpose of the interviews was to better understand commercial aviation issues facing Washington State and identify important local regional and state aviation market trends.

Airport Activity Forecasts. The activity forecasts for each airport have started, with completion expected by October.

LATS Next Steps:

- Continued follow up of airport inventory surveys will be conducted through July.
- Complete summary of stakeholder interviews by July 23, 2006.
- Evaluate statewide airport classification criteria and performance measures, and provide recommendations.

- Review and evaluate airport facilities and services data collected through the web-based survey and provide preliminary summary report by August 1, 2006.
- Prepare and distribute an online survey to stakeholders and the public to identify information needs and elicit feedback on aviation issues.
- Prepare summary analysis of existing and available airport reserve capacity, existing programmed capacity improvements, and estimate existing total system capacity and distribution.
- Prepare final assessment report and submit to the appropriate standing committees of the legislature, the governor, the transportation commission and regional transportation planning organizations by September 30, 2006.
- The high-speed rail assessment and air cargo forecast will begin in August and will be completed by December.
- The air service market study for the commercial airports will be completed by December.
- Public outreach efforts will continue throughout the project with participation at the August Washington Airport Management Association (WAMA) Conference and the Washington Chapter American Planning Association (APA) Conference in October. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), and WAMA have provided website links from their web page to LATS, helping to increase awareness of the project. LATS articles and progress reports are being highlighted in the PSRC and WPPA monthly newsletters. The second quarterly newsletter will be developed and distributed the first week of October.